

Message Text

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51

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /060 W

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O P 011635Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7455

AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR TD US VE

SUBJECT: LABOR LEADER ALLEGES US NAVY POISED FOR
INTERVENTION IN TRINIDAD

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. GEORGE WEEKES, LEADER OF OILFIELD WORKERS TRADE UNION (OWTU) WHICH IS CURRENTLY LOCKED IN LABOR DISPUTES WITH TEXACO HERE, IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH TRINIDAD'S "EXPRESS" NEWSPAPER HAS CLAIMED THAT US NAVY SHIPS ARE POISED OFFSHORE TO INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF TEXACO IN CURRENT DISPUTE AND THAT GOTT PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS' RECENT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FORD WAS PART OF A USG DESIGN TO USE TRINIDAD AS A TOOL AND EVEN MILITARY STAGING AREA FOR AN AMERICAN CONFRONTATION WITH VENEZUELA.

2. INTERVIEW WILL APPARENTLY APPEAR IN TOMORROW'S PAPER, SUNDAY MARCH 2. COUNTER TO THE USUAL PRACTICE OF THE PRESS HERE NOT TO DOUBLE CHECK STORIES, THE
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EXPRESS REPORTER IN THIS INSTANCE CONTACTED ME AND

REQUESTED COMMENT ON WEEKE'S ALLEGATIONS. I THEREFORE WAS ABLE CATEGORICALLY TO DENY THAT THE US NAVY WAS OFFSHORE TRINIDAD WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVENE AND SUPPRESS THE OWTU. I ALSO EMPHASIZED THE QUITE NORMAL NATURE OF THE CONSULTATION IN WASHINGTON BETWEEN THE LEADERS OF TWO FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS WHILE DR. WILLIAMS WAS IN THE US AND STRESSED THE CONTINUING GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND VENEZUELA WHICH IN NO WAY COULD BE DESCRIBED AS A CONFRONTATION. I NOTED THAT BOTH THE USG AND VENEZUELA WERE DISPLEASED WITH SOME MINOR ASPECTS OF THE TRADE ACT BUT THAT THIS HAD NOT CHANGED OUR WARM RELATIONS. THE US IS NOT ENGAGED IN A CONFRONTATION WITH VENEZUEAL AND CERTAINLY WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO UTILIZE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AS A TOOL IN ANY RELATIONSHIP WITH OUT OTHER FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS IN THE HEMISPHERE.

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3. COMMENT: WEEKES' STATEMENTS ARE OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO EMBARRASS PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS AND CAPTURE HEADLINES FROM THE PRIME MINISTER JUST AFTER WILLIAMS' RETURN TO TRINIDAD AFTER ALMOST TWO MONTHS OF FOREIGN TRAVEL, MUCH OF WHICH INVOLVED NEGOTIATIONS WITH TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS FOR FURTHER JOINT VENTURE OPERATIONS IN TRINIDAD. WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT BOTH TEXACO AND OWTU FEEL THEY HAVE SOMEWHAT BOXED THEMSELVES INTO CORNERS IN THE LABOR NEGOTIATIONS AND AS IMPASSE LENGTHENS WEEKES' STATEMENTS HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT MORE SHRILL.

4. WHETHER GOTT ITSELF WILL ISSUE A STATEMENT REFUTING WEEKES' ALLEGATIONS IS PROBLEMATICAL AND MAY DEPEND ON HOW MUCH PLAY WEEKES' COMMENTS RECEIVE. ON THE WHOLE, WILLIAMS TRIES TO AVOID GETTING INTO A DIRECT SHOUTING MATCH WITH WEEKES FOR SOUND POLITICAL REASONS. I EMPHASIZED TO EXPRESS REPORTER THAT I DID NOT WISH TO CAST ANY ASPERSIONS UPON MR. WEEKES

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FOR HE HAD HIS OWN PROBLEMS IN REPRESENTING HIS UNION MEMBERS AT THIS TIME, BUT MY COMMENTS WOULD ONLY BE ADDRESSED TO THE ALLEGED ACTIONS OR INTENTIONS OF THE USG. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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